



## State Senator Robert Garton District 41



### DNA BACKLOGS MAY SOON BE A THING OF THE PAST

The State Police crime labs in Indiana play a critical role in the multitude of criminal cases that are being prosecuted in our state. Test results completed by the lab could be the evidence that sends a serial rapist to jail, or frees an innocent person from wrongful imprisonment. However, over the last few years there have been many setbacks in this important work due to the large number of samples which are sent to the lab to be processed.

More than 5,689 cases at the four Indiana State Police crime labs wait to be analyzed. Of those, approximately 700 include DNA analysis. The rest include drug samples, fingerprints and firearms. All are important evidence needed by the state to successfully prosecute criminals.

Due to lack of funding and qualified employees the crime labs have suffered from lengthy time delays. Often times prisoners and victims must wait years to learn the results of DNA analysis that should be done quickly to ensure a speedy trial.

However, there is now a bright light at the end of this tunnel. During the last session of the Indiana General Assembly, Republican lawmakers earmarked additional revenue for the overburdened crime labs.

House Bill 1001, which established the Indiana Counterterrorism and Security Council and enacted a range of anti-terrorism measures, included a provision which would set aside part of a service charge from license branch transactions to expand the State Police crime labs. As a result, \$1 million will be available this year to reduce the DNA sample backlog. Over the next four years, the total additional funding will exceed \$12 million. Due to this critical decision, the labs will be more able to process the thousands of samples that currently lay waiting and the number of cases should be greatly reduced within the next two to three years. After that time the delay period should be no more than 45 days to determine these important results.

Similarly, the crime labs could possibly receive \$500,000 in federal funds in the near future due to the assistance of U.S. Senators Richard Lugar and Evan Bayh. With these two important funding sources, the crime labs should soon begin to function in a more expedient manner, enabling the wheels of justice to turn faster.

*Garton represents District 41, which includes Bartholomew County and portions of Johnson and Shelby counties.*

# Straight from the Senate

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